

OPINIONS AND DECLARATIONS RENDERED BY THE INTER- NATIONAL COMMISSION ON ZOOLOGICAL NOMENCLATURE

Edited by

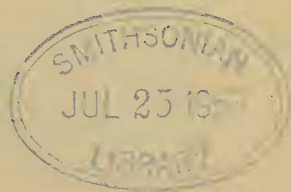
FRANCIS HEMMING, C.M.G., C.B.E.

Secretary to the Commission

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OPINION 390

Determination under the Plenary Powers of the taxon to which shall be applicable the specific name *simus* Linnaeus, 1766, as published in the combination *Coluber simus* (Class Reptilia)



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INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON ZOOLOGICAL NOMENCLATURE

COMPOSITION AT THE TIME OF THE ADOPTION OF THE RULING GIVEN IN OPINION 390

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Vice-President : Senhor Dr. Afranio do Amaral (*Sao Paulo, Brazil*) (12th August 1953)

Secretary : Mr. Francis Hemming (*London, England*) (27th July 1948)

B. The Members of the Commission

(Arranged in order of precedence by reference to date of election or of most recent re-election, as prescribed by the International Congress of Zoology)

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Professor J. R. DYMOND (*University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada*) (12th August 1953)

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Professor Béla HANKÓ (*Mezőgazdasági Múzeum Budapest, Hungary*) (12th August 1953)

Dr. Norman R. STOLL (*Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, New York, N.Y., U.S.A.*) (12th August 1953)

Mr. P. C. SYLVESTER-BRADLEY (*Sheffield University, Sheffield, England*) (12th August 1953)

Dr. L. B. HOLTHUIS (*Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie, Leiden, The Netherlands*) (12th August 1953)

DETERMINATION UNDER THE PLENARY POWERS OF
THE TAXON TO WHICH SHALL BE APPLICABLE
THE SPECIFIC NAME "SIMUS" LINNAEUS,
1766, AS PUBLISHED IN THE COMBINATION
"COLUBER SIMUS" (CLASS REPTILIA)

RULING :—(1) The following action is hereby taken under the Plenary Powers, namely :—

(a) It is hereby directed that the specific name *simus* Linnaeus, 1766, as published in the combination *Coluber simus*, shall apply to the taxon described as *Heterodon simus* on page 57, and figured in plate 15, of volume 4, of Holbrook (J.E.), 1842, *North American Herpetology ; or a description of the reptiles inhabiting the United States*, Philadelphia, Dobson ;

(b) It is hereby directed that the locality " Carolina ", restricted to " the vicinity of Charleston ", be the " restricted locality " for the nominal species *Coluber simus* Linnaeus, 1766, as defined under (a) above.

(2) The under-mentioned specific names are hereby placed on the *Official List of Specific Names in Zoology* with the Name Nos. 685 and 686 respectively :—

(a) *simus* Linnaeus, 1766, as published in the combination *Coluber simus*, as determined under the Plenary Powers under (1)(a) above and with the restricted locality designated under the same Powers under (1)(b) above ;

(b) *platyrhinos* Latreille, 1801, as published in the combination *Heterodon platyrhinos*.

I.—THE STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On 3rd March 1952, Dr. Richard A. Edgren (*Northwestern University, Cresap Biological Laboratory, Evanston, Illinois, U.S.A.*) submitted the following application asking for the use by the Commission of its Plenary Powers for the purpose of determining the taxon to which shall be applicable the specific name *simus* Linnaeus, 1766, as published in the combination *Coluber simus* (Class Reptilia) and of designating a restricted locality for that species :—

Proposed determination under the Plenary Powers of the species to which the trivial name “*simus*” Linnaeus, 1766, as published in the combination “*Coluber simus*” (Class Reptilia) is to be applied

By RICHARD A. EDGREN

(*Cresap Biological Laboratory, Northwestern University,
Evanston, Illinois, U.S.A.*)

(Enclosure to letter dated 3rd March 1952)

In the course of a systematic study of the genus *Heterodon* Latreille, 1801 (*Hist. nat.*, Rept. 4 : 32), it has become apparent that the trivial name (*platyrhinos*, Latreille, *loc. cit.*) of the most common and most widely distributed member of the genus is antedated by the trivial name *simus* Linnaeus, 1766 (*Systema Naturae* (ed. 12) 1(1) : 375) which has been misapplied. Linnaeus described a snake with a black belly and 124 ventral plates, taken by C. D. Garden in Carolina. The ventral characteristic is more typical of the common hog-nosed snake (currently known as *Heterodon platyrhinos*, Klauber, 1948, *Copeia* 1948 : 8) than it is of the coastal plain species (currently known as *Heterodon simus*) ; the notation of a black belly completely excludes the coastal plain form from consideration, although such a character is frequent on the common hog-nosed snake. The typically black-bellied species (*Heterodon nasicus* Baird and Girard, 1852, *Reptiles in Stansbury's Exploration and Survey of the Valley of the Great Salt Lake of Utah* : 352—353) is excluded on the basis of locality. In view of these data it seems indisputable that Linnaeus had a common hog-nosed snake in hand when he described *Coluber simus*.

2. The trivial name *simus* has been used in its present connotation for more than 100 years, and almost all references to the species have used this name. The name *platyrhinos* was used from the time of its

description until 1917 in its present connotation, and was resurrected by Klauber in 1948. All of the older literature used this name in discussing the common hog-nosed snake as has literature since 1948. The application of the trivial name *simus* to the common hog-nosed snake and the resurrection of the oldest synonym for the coastal plain species would result in confusion certainly not warranted by the desire for a strict adherence to the Rules. The present case is exactly comparable to recently proposed changes in the names of garter snakes (Klauber, *op. cit.*); these changes have been opposed recently by Schmidt and Conant (1950, *Bull. zool. Nomencl.* 2(3) : 67—68) who request the Commission to stabilise the names involved in their pre-Klauber connotations; in this they have been supported by some 25 other North American herpetologists and more recently by Klauber also (*ibid.* 2 : 351).¹

3. In order to place the names of the foregoing species beyond the range of further dispute, I accordingly ask the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature :—

- (1) to use its Plenary Powers to direct that the trivial name *simus* Linnaeus, 1766, as published in the combination *Coluber simus*, shall apply to the species described as *Heterodon simus* on page 57, and figured on plate 15, of volume 4 of Holbrook (J.E.), 1842, *North American Herpetology ; or a description of the reptiles inhabiting the United States*, Philadelphia, Dobson, and that “Carolina” (restricted to the vicinity of Charles-town) is to be treated as the type locality of the species, the nomenclature of which is to be so stabilised ;
- (2) to place the under-mentioned trivial names on the *Official List of Specific Trivial Names in Zoology* :—
 - (a) *simus* Linnaeus, 1766, as published in the combination *Coluber simus*, as proposed, under (1) above, to be defined under the Plenary Powers ;
 - (b) *platyrhinos* Latreille, 1801, as published in the combination *Heterodon platyrhinos*.

II.—THE SUBSEQUENT HISTORY OF THE CASE

2. Registration of the present application : Upon the receipt of Dr. Edgren’s application, the question of the use by the Commission for the purpose of determining the identity of the nominal

¹ For the decision by the Commission on the question of the name *Coluber sirtalis* Linnaeus, 1758 here referred to see *Opinion* 385 (pp. 191—230 of the present volume).

species *Coluber simus* Linnaeus, 1766, and matters incidental thereto was allotted the Registered Number Z.N.(S.) 662.

3. Publication of the present application : The present application was sent to the printer on 19th May 1952 and was published in the *Bulletin of Zoological Nomenclature* on 29th August of the same year (Edgren, 1952, *Bull. zool. Nomencl.* 6 : 354—355).

4. Issue of Public Notices : Under the revised arrangements prescribed by the Thirteenth International Congress of Zoology, Paris, 1948 (1950, *Bull. zool. Nomencl.* 4 : 51—56), Public Notice of the possible use by the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature of its Plenary Powers in the present case was given on 29th August 1952 (a) in Part 11 of volume 6 of the *Bulletin of Zoological Nomenclature* (the Part in which Dr. Edgren's application was published) and (b) to the other prescribed serial publications. In addition, such Notice was given also to certain general zoological serial publications.

5. Comments received : The issue of the Public Notices specified in paragraph 4 above elicited eight letters of support for the action proposed. In two cases letters were signed by two specialists and accordingly in all ten specialists supported the present application. The communications so received are reproduced in paragraphs 6 to 13 below. No objection to the action proposed was received from any source.

6. Support received from Professor Hobart M. Smith (University of Illinois, Department of Zoology, Urbana, Illinois, U.S.A.) : On 22nd September 1952, Professor Hobart M. Smith (*University of Illinois, Department of Zoology, Urbana, Illinois, U.S.A.*) addressed the following letter to the Commission in support of the present application (Smith, 1952, *Bull. zool. Nomencl.* 9 : 157) :—

In view of the stability which the trivial name *simus* Linnaeus, 1766, as published in the combination *Coluber simus*, has enjoyed for such a long period and likewise in view of the acknowledged power of the Commission to associate any name with any species under justifiable circumstances, in my opinion the recommendation by Edgren (1952, *Bull. zool. Nomencl.* 6 : 354—355) that the Commission perpetuate this name in the present application should be upheld.

7. Support received from Dr. Karl P. Schmidt and Dr. Clifford H. Pope (Chicago Natural History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.) : On 9th October 1952, Dr. Karl P. Schmidt and Dr. Clifford H. Pope (*Chicago Natural History Museum, Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.*) intimated their support for the present application in the following letter (Schmidt & Pope, 1952, *Bull. zool. Nomencl.* **9** : 158) :—

We are entirely in favour of Mr. Richard Edgren's proposal for action to confirm the current usage of the names *Heterodon simus* and *Heterodon platyrhinos* and to place the trivial names *simus* and *platyrhinos* on the *Official List of Specific Trivial Names in Zoology*. This refers to your *Z.N.(S.)* 662 (*Bull. zool. Nomencl.* **6** : 354—355).

8. Support received from Dr. Laurence M. Klauber (San Diego, California, U.S.A.) : On 15th October 1952, Dr. Laurence M. Klauber (*San Diego, California, U.S.A.*) signified his support for the present application in the following letter (Klauber, 1952, *Bull. zool. Nomencl.* **9** : 158) :—

I have reviewed the proposal set forth by Richard A. Edgren (*Bull. zool. Nom.*, vol. **6**, p. 354) with regard to the allocation of certain trivial names in the genus *Heterodon*. I am fully in agreement with his proposal, believing that it will eliminate future confusion that would otherwise be inevitable.

9. Support received from Dr. James A. Oliver (Curator of Reptiles, New York Zoological Society, Zoological Park, New York City) : On 22nd October 1952, Dr. James A. Oliver (*Curator of Reptiles, New York Zoological Society, Zoological Park, New York City*) addressed to the Commission the following letter in which he intimated his support for the present application and also for another then recently published application relating to the name of a reptile (Oliver, 1952, *Bull. zool. Nomencl.* **9** : 157) :—

I am writing to support two recent requests for use of the Plenary Powers of the International Commission in regard to the nomenclature of Reptiles. I believe that both of these proposals are desirable from the standpoint of nomenclatorial stability. Both proposals apply to well-known forms and involve names that have been long in use. The proposals in question are :—

- (1) Validation of the generic name *Dasypeltis* Wagler, 1830, for the African Egg-eating Snake, by Carl Gans and Arthur Loveridge (Commission's reference : Z.N.(S.) 660)².
- (2) Determination of the species to which the trivial name *simus* Linnaeus, 1766, as published in the combination *Coluber simus*, is to be applied, by Richard A. Edgren (Commission's reference Z.N.(S.) 662).

I am in complete agreement with all of the requests made under each of these proposals.

10. Support received from Professor Arnold B. Grobman (University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, U.S.A.) : On 13th November, 1952 Professor Arnold B. Grobman (*University of Florida, College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Biology, Gainesville, Florida, U.S.A.*) addressed the following letter to the Commission in support of the present application :—

Reference is made to Z.N.(S.) 662 (*simus*). I am not acquainted with all the pertinent arguments regarding this particular matter but from what I do know I am sympathetic to Edgren's proposal regarding *simus* and *platyrhinos*.

11. Support received from Mr. Roger Conant (Philadelphia Zoological Garden, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.) : On 18th November 1952, Mr. Roger Conant (*Philadelphia Zoological Garden, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.*) addressed a letter to the Commission commenting upon the present and another then recently published application relating to the names of species of reptiles. The following is an extract from the foregoing letter of the portion in which he gave his support for the present application :—

I am in favor of the proposals outlined by Mr. Richard A. Edgren of Chicago, Illinois, that the specific names *simus* and *platyrhinos* of the genus *Heterodon* be placed upon the *Official List of Specific Trivial Names in Zoology*. (Commission's Reference Z.N.(S.) 662.)

12. Support received from Dr. M. Graham Netting (Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.) : On 21st November

² For the decision by the Commission in regard to the name to be used for the African Egg-eating Snake see *Opinion* 387 (pp. 241—250 of the present volume).

1952, Dr. M. Graham Netting (*Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.*) intimated his support for the present application in the following letter to the Commission :—

I am writing to let you know that I heartily endorse the recommendations of Richard A. Edgren as contained in Commission's reference Z.N.(S.) 662. I am strongly of the opinion that great confusion would result if the Commission did not follow the proposal detailed in paragraph 3 on page 355 of volume 6 of the *Bulletin of Zoological Nomenclature*.

13. Support received from Dr. Neil D. Richmond and Mr. Carl Gans (Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.) : On 26th November 1952, Dr. Neil D. Richmond and Mr. Carl Gans (*Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.*) addressed the following letter to the Commission in support of the present application :—

We have recently received a copy of Dr. Edgren's proposal regarding the retention of the trivial names *simus* Linnaeus, 1766, and *platyrhinos* Latreille, 1801.

Both of these names are well established for the species in question and since neither taxonomic nor other benefits would result from a change, and an unnecessary amount of confusion would result, we wish to second the proposal in question and ask that it be approved and the nomenclature stabilized accordingly.

III.—THE DECISION TAKEN BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON ZOOLOGICAL NOMENCLATURE

14. Issue of Voting Paper V.P.(54)54 : On 5th April 1954, a Voting Paper (V.P.(54)54) was issued in which the Members of the Commission were invited to vote either for, or against, "the proposal relating to the name *simus* Linnaeus, 1767, as published in the combination *Coluber simus*, as specified in Points (1) and (2) in paragraph 3 on page 355 of volume 6 of the *Bulletin of Zoological Nomenclature*" [i.e. in the Points numbered as above in paragraph 3 of the application reproduced in the first paragraph of the present *Opinion*].

15. The Prescribed Voting Period : As the foregoing Voting Paper was issued under the Three-Month Rule, the Prescribed Voting Period closed on 5th July 1955.

16. Particulars of the Voting on Voting Paper V.P.(54)54 : At the close of the Prescribed Voting Period, the state of the voting on Voting Paper V.P.(54)54 was as follows :—

- (a) *Affirmative Votes had been given by the following eighteen (18) Commissioners (arranged in the order in which Votes were received) :*

Holthuis ; Bonnet ; Hering ; Vokes ; Riley ; Esaki ; Dymond ; Boschma ; Jaczewski ; Lemche ; Hankó ; do Amaral ; Bradley (J.C.) ; Hemming ; Cabrera ; Sylvester-Bradley ; Stoll ; Mertens ;

- (b) *Negative Votes, one (1) :*

Pearson ;

- (c) *Voting Papers not returned :*

None.

17. Declaration of Result of Vote : On 7th July 1954, Mr. Hemming, Secretary to the International Commission, acting as Returning Officer for the Vote taken on Voting Paper V.P.(54)54, signed a Certificate that the Votes cast were as set out in paragraph 16 above and declaring that the proposal submitted in the foregoing Voting Paper had been duly adopted and that the decision so taken was the decision of the International Commission in the matter aforesaid.

18. Preparation of the Ruling given in the present "Opinion" :
On 23rd February 1956, Mr. Hemming prepared the Ruling given in the present *Opinion* and at the same time signed a Certificate that the terms of that Ruling were in complete accord with those of the proposal approved by the International Commission in its Vote on Voting Paper V.P.(54)54.

19. Original References : The following are the original references for the names placed on the *Official List of Specific Names in Zoology* by the Ruling given in the present *Opinion* :—

platyrhinos, *Heterodon*, Latreille, 1801, in Deterville's Ed.,
Buffon's Rept. 4 : 32
simus, *Coluber*, Linnaeus, 1766, *Syst. Nat.* (ed. 12) (1) 1 : 375

20. Family-Group-Name Aspects : As the present *Opinion* is concerned exclusively with the status of certain specific names, no family-group-name problem arises for consideration.

21. At the time of the submission of the present application the name applicable to the second portion of a binomen was "trivial name". This was altered to "specific name" by the Fourteenth International Congress of Zoology, Copenhagen, 1953, which at the same time made corresponding changes in the titles of the *Official List* and *Official Index* of names of this category. These changes in terminology have been incorporated in the Ruling given in the present *Opinion*.

22. The prescribed procedures were duly complied with by the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature in dealing with the present case, and the present *Opinion* is accordingly hereby rendered in the name of the said International Commission by the under-signed Francis Hemming, Secretary to the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature, in virtue of all and every the powers conferred upon him in that behalf.

23. The present *Opinion* shall be known as *Opinion* Three Hundred and Ninety (390) of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature.

DONE in London, this Twenty-Third day of February, Nineteen Hundred and Fifty-Six.

*Secretary to the International Commission
on Zoological Nomenclature*

FRANCIS HEMMING